

AN OYSTER PIRATE KILLED

CAPT. WHITEHOUSE FOUND DREDGING AND SHOT DEAD IN A FIGHT.

Annapolis, Md., Feb. 19. – At 1 o'clock this morning the police sloop Folly of the oyster navy, in command of Capt. George W. Clarke, arrived in this port. She had as a prisoner the oyster schooner Albert Nickel of Baltimore. On the deck of the Nickel lay the body of her Captain, William Frank Whitehouse, with a bullet-hole in his left temple and a 16-shooter by his side. The blood from the dead Captain's wound made a crimson stream along the bulwarks of the vessel. The 16-repeating rifles scattered near-by and the many empty shells of discharged cartridges added to the warlike appearance of the scene. It has made a tremendous sensation here to-day, for it is the first real tragedy in the history of the oyster navy.

There is constant difficulty between the dredgers and tongers of the bay, and in order to watch the 1,500 vessels engaged in the oyster trade and keep them off forbidden territory, there is a police navy of three steamers and fourteen sloops. It is the largest navy of its peculiar kind in the world. The sloops have certain limits assigned them, and the steamers patrol the entire bay and maintain a general supervision over sloops, visiting them at intervals and supplying them with ammunition and stores. The oyster grounds nearest Baltimore are those around the shores of Ann Arundel County. This is the beat assigned the Folly, commanded by Capt. Clarke. He has had considerable trouble this year with the depredators, and there have been several lively skirmishes, but no one was injured until last night; in fact, in all the previous history of the oyster navy it has never killed any one. The battles have been intended more to intimidate than to injure, a great deal of gunpowder has been burned, and that is about all. Last night, however, this record of much noise and no damage was broken.

About 8 o'clock in the evening the Folly lay in her beat off Hackett's Point, just north of the mouth of the Severn River. From Sandy Point, a mile on, came the sound of the falling and winding of dredgers, showing that there was unlawful work going on at that bar. Capt. Clarke weighed anchor. As he approached he saw seven vessels on Sandy Point, and heard a voice say:

“Here comes Clarke; what are you going to do?”

The answer came from the Nickel, “Stand your ground; surround him, and don't let him take you.”

The Folly came up and called to the Nickel to heave to. This her Captain refused to do, and instead put on more sail to make off. In the meantime the other vessels disposed themselves so as to place the Folly in the middle of them. This Capt. Clarke avoided by tacking out, but keeping along with the Nickel. Being within 30 yards of the vessel Capt. Clarke hailed Capt. Whitehouse, to know if he was going to heave to. Finding that he would not, Capt. Clarke, as is customary in such cases, ordered his men to fire into the rigging of the Nickel. Four or five shots were thus fired, the Captain telling the crew to be careful. Then the Nickel opened on the Folly. In this she was joined by two other of the dredgers, and for 10 minutes the Folly engaged three vessels in a hand-to-hand fight of the warmest character. Bullets struck the sails of the Folly, whistled past the

heads of the crew, and cut the rigging, but Capt. Clarke held his own in this disadvantageous position until the Nickel hauled up.

With revolver in hand Capt. Clarke jumped aboard the Nickel, and its crew of 10 surrendered to him. Telling them to stand back, he drove them into the hold. They pleaded to come out to keep from smothering, and this they were allowed to do. The Captain was now told of the death of Capt. Whitehouse. He lay on the deck of the vessel, a bullet hole in his left temple and empty shells all around him. Two undischarged cartridges were still in his rifle.

The Leary, another vessel, was captured, but was not taken into Annapolis harbor. A jury of inquest was summoned, but it adjourned until to-morrow. An examination of the wound showed that the ball had entered the left temple and passed out at the back of the head, near the base of the brain. Death must have been instantaneous. The crew of the Nickel, Alfred Fane, August Brown, Michael Kelly, George Spysical, Albert Saraio, John Wagner, Warren Armstrong, Thomas Campbell, Clarence Wright, and George Smith, were placed in jail. The Captain of the vessel was guilty of dredging at night and on forbidden grounds. Capt. Whitehouse leaves a widow and five children. He had an insurance of \$4,000 on his life and was a member of the order of Knights of Pythias. He lived in Baltimore, but was born in Norfolk, Va. His widow was notified by telegraph of his death.

It is understood that the crew of the Nickel confessed to a plot of four dredging vessels to drive Clarke off the grounds, and that the conspiracy had been concocted Saturday afternoon. A legal question that will come up and will be stoutly contested will be the responsibility in the case as the first affair of its kind, and the fact that the dead Captain's friends are well to do will give the case an unusual importance.

The New York Times
Published: February 20, 1888